

AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Czech Parliamentarian Visit

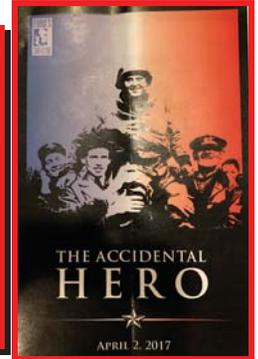


Czech Parliamentarians Ondřej Benešík (L) (photo credit: <http://valassky.denik.cz>), and Pavel Šrámek (R) (photo credit: <http://www.regionpodlupou.cz>)

During the week of May 15, 2017, AFoCR sponsored two Czech Parliamentarians for a full week of educational and cultural activities in Washington, D.C. The goal of the visit, by Ondřej Benešík (KDU) and Pavel Šrámek (ANO), was to foster understanding among legislators of both countries regarding political processes and cultural differences. Highlights of their Washington experience included visits to the Pentagon, the State Department, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the historic home of George Washington- Mount Vernon in Alexandria, as well as a private walking tour through Georgetown, an 80th birthday gala dinner celebration for former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at the Czech Embassy, and a meeting with the new Czech Ambassador Hynek Kmoníček.

On Capitol Hill, each Parliamentarian had the opportunity to shadow a U.S. Representative for a day to observe the workings of the U.S. Congress. U.S. Representatives Jan Schakowsky (D-Illinois) and Debbie Dingell (D-Michigan) graciously agreed to host the Czech visitors. The Parliamentarians expressed satisfaction with the week of robust activities designed to strengthen ties between the U.S. and the Czech Republic. The visit was organized and executed by AFoCR Directors Patty Stack, Kristyna Driehaus, Tom Dine, Robert Doubek, and Alex Braun, along with AFoCR Advisor Magdaléna Vošalíková in Prague and numerous Czech Embassy staff members.

AFoCR Sponsors Ford's Theater Play "The Accidental Hero"



Actor Patrick Dewane (L) with AFoCR Director Phil Kasik (R) at Ford's Theater, April 2, 2017

AFoCR sponsored a one-night performance of the play "The Accidental Hero," to a full house at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. on April 2. The multi-media one-man show, written and performed by Patrick Dewane, tells the true story of his grandfather, a World War II officer who miraculously liberated his own grandparents' native villages in Czechoslovakia. Dewane brought archival material found in his grandfather's Wisconsin basement to life in an enthralling, humorous, and heartwarming tale of astonishing coincidences.

"The show is very personal, about my grandfather. It's a story I didn't discover until 20 years after he died. And now his 'lost' story prompts others to tell their own family stories," said Dewane, noting that during his lifetime his grandfather did not talk about his service in the war.

Dewane took on a dozen different roles to recount his grandfather's journey from Omaha Beach, the Battle of the Bulge, and the war's end. The "accidental hero" demonstrated hidden leadership qualities and, in liberating his ancestral village, reconnected with his Czech roots.

The performance was staged through the generosity of the Ford's Theatre Society, Marlene Malek, and AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek. Ford's was a fitting venue to create a sense of history, both on and off the stage. It is one of the most visited sites in the nation's capital. Reopened in 1968, more than a hundred years after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, Ford's has become a national destination for exploring Lincoln's ideas and leadership principles.

Sponsorship of this widely acclaimed performance allowed AFoCR to further ties among the U.S., the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic by uniting the local Czech and Slovak communities, as well as lovers of the theater in a true story about freedom, World War II, and the eternal question of: "Who am I?"

**AFoCR to Hold
Gala Award Dinner
in Washington for 1918-2018
Centennial Celebration
Save the Date:
On or About
November 1, 2018**



Letter from AFoCR President Tom Dine Fighting for Democracy



*AFoCR President
Tom Dine with
Czech
Ambassador
Hynek Kmoníček*

The citizens of the sovereign, democratic Czech Republic will go to the polls to elect a new government and prime minister on October 20 and 21, 2017. They will elect the 200 members of the Czech Chamber of Deputies, and the leader of the winning party will be asked to form a government, most probably a coalition of several minor parties. The leader of the party getting most votes will become the government's prime minister. This will be the ninth free and fair national election held by the Czech people since the collapse of communist rule in 1989.

This forthcoming election, however, will take place at a tense time in Europe because of ongoing Russian efforts to unravel democratic systems, as well as military and economic alliances. Will and can the Czech Republic withstand meddling orchestrated by Moscow? Will Russia's Vladimir Putin, the poster child of modern authoritarianism, exploit the vigorous nature of the Czech Republic's open society and interfere in that election, particularly using tools of cyber technology to distort information, tinker with voting processes, control the media's content, distribute propaganda, demean civil society, and weaken political pluralism?

Putin's declared objective is to establish a *Ruskiy Mir* (Russian World), with the following methods observed with increasing frequency:

1. Misusing and distorting cyber technology to skew elections in the United States, France, Italy, and elsewhere.
2. Violating international borders such as in Georgia and Ukraine, seizing and occupying Ukrainian territory, illegally annexing Crimea, and threatening democratic and independent Baltic and Visegrad countries.
3. Spreading propaganda and disinformation, as well as preventing foreign broadcasting stations from reaching Russian audiences, while expanding the reach of its own mouthpieces, like the television channel RT and the news service Sputnik.
4. Enlisting political consultants and lobbyists from democratic countries to represent the interests of Russia in Europe and North America, with other autocracies - China, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan - following its lead.
5. Revalidating the concept of the leader-for-life, in the person of Putin, with Jan Urban in Hungary, and others following.

The security and moral interests of the Euro-Atlantic alliance are to assure that this array of countries stays free and whole, democratic and prosperous. This means the West must vigorously and actively counter actions of an aggressor state aiming to restore its influence, shore up domestic support for the Kremlin autocracy, and weaken Western unity, values, and institutions. To ensure

a free, fair, and open national Czech election for a new parliament this fall, the Czech population and its friends in Europe and North America must expose Russia's malicious efforts and work to suppress them. That is a major reason AFoCR is working closely with the Prague-based European Values think tank.

I want to highlight here a remarkable life of freedom, that of Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, who died in late May 2017 at the age of 89. He was an advisor to the American Friends of the Czech Republic, a long-time supporter of Czech freedom and democracy, a lucid and productive scholar and author, and National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter. Over many years, he championed strategic thinking and policymaking, coherence in policy execution, and reliability in American foreign policy. A Polish exile with a Czech-born wife, he championed America's leadership in global affairs. Privately, in his latter years, Brzezinski regretted the rise of authoritarianism in Turkey, Hungary, and Poland.

As another highlight, I recommend a timely and relevant, but short (126 pages), current *New York Times* best-selling book entitled *On Tyranny* by Professor Timothy Snyder of Yale University. His prolific writing has detailed the collapse of democracies and their swift devolutions into right-wing authoritarian and fascist governments in the 1920s and 1930s. His two most famous books have won distinguished awards: *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* and *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*.

After providing 20 lessons from the 20th century, Snyder states, "The danger we now face is of a passage from the politics of inevitability to the politics of eternity, from a naive and flawed sort of democratic republic to a confused and cynical sort of fascist oligarchy.... If young people do not begin to make history, politicians of eternity and inevitability will destroy it."

Snyder concludes by quoting Hamlet, "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite That ever I was born to set it right... Nay, come, let's go together." So be it in the forthcoming Czech election.

Thomas A. Dine
President, AFoCR



*AFoCR Advisor
Zbigniew Brzezinski
(photo credit:
Center for Strategic
and International
Studies)*

Czech Parliamentarians' Visit to Washington, DC - May 15, 2017



AFoCR Directors Patty Stack and Kristyna Driehaus gave a tour of Washington, D.C. and iconic sites of Virginia to the two visiting Czech Parliamentarians Ondřej Benešik and Pavel Šrámek .



EU Day at Czech Embassy and Art Exhibit by Catherine Cabaniss at Bohemian National Hall, NYC



AFoCR Director of Communications Lillis Werder Represents AFoCR at Czech Embassy on European Union Day, May 13, 2017



(L to R) AFoCR Director Phil Kasik, Artist Catherine Cabaniss, and AFoCR Director Bill Cabaniss at the Opening Exhibit of Palimpsests for the BBLA Gallery at Bohemian National Hall, New York City, May 3, 2017

AFoCR Celebrates 80th Birthday of Secretary Madeleine Albright at Czech Embassy



Left: Czech Parliamentarian Pavel Šrámek with Secretary Madeleine Albright. Right: AFoCR Directors Kristyna Driehaus, Robert Doubek, AFoCR Advisor Christine Bedoret, Czech Parliamentarian Pavel Šrámek, and AFoCR Director Patty Stack at Czech Embassy Birthday Dinner for Former Secretary Albright

On May 16, 2017, Czech Ambassador Hynek Kmoníček hosted a gala dinner at the Czech Embassy in honor of the 80th birthday of former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Approximately 200 guests attended this elegant celebration, including several officers of AFoCR and three former ambassadors to the Czech Republic – William Cabaniss, Norman Eisen, and Andrew Schapiro. Two visiting Czech parliamentarians, Ondřej Benešík and Pavel Šrámek, also were delighted to be able to attend the significant event. A special feature of the evening was a performance by noted Czech pianist Tomáš Kačo. Ambassador Kmoníček spoke eloquently of Secretary Albright's extraordinary record of contribution to both the Czech Republic and the United States. Secretary Albright noted that she is deeply proud of her Czech roots, and she stressed her satisfaction at the ongoing efforts to maintain excellent relations between the two countries she has cherished so deeply.



AFoCR Chairman Fred Malek, Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Former Vice President Dick Cheney, and Vice President Mike Pence at the home of Fred Malek, January 27, 2017 (photo credit: Lillis Werder)

New Czech Ambassador Welcomed



AFoCR Directors Welcome Ambassador Kmoníček at Luncheon in Washington May 4, 2017

AFoCR Directors were pleased to welcome the newly arrived Ambassador of the Czech Republic Hynek Kmoníček at a luncheon in Washington, just before he presented his credentials at a White House ceremony.

Ambassador Kmoníček comes to Washington after a distinguished diplomatic career spanning more than two decades. He first served in the Department for Middle East and Africa of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs and subsequently as Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Australia, India, and the United Nations in New York.

Before his diplomatic service, the Ambassador studied English and Arabic at Charles University in Prague as well as Middle East history, Hebrew, and Arabic at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel.

Sokol Slet in Cedar Rapids



Presenting Colors at American Sokol Slet & Festival, Cedar Rapids, Iowa (photo credit: Kateřina Lizkova Kulhankova)

The American Sokol National Organization held the XXIV American Sokol Slet & Festival from June 22 to 25, 2017, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The event, organized by Sokol's Western District, was the first Slet in four years, and over 500 participants and attendants took part, under the theme: "The Tradition Continues." The activities started with the arrival of 14 cyclists who rode 300 miles from Chicago to raise money for Sokol youth camps, followed by the traditional opening ceremony program, team marching, and calisthenics and volleyball competitions. A traditional folk dance in national costumes added color. The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library provided a perfect setting for a banquet and the 1st National Awards Ceremony, which was attended by several former Olympians and Dr. Bořek Lizec, the Consul General of the Czech Republic in Chicago.

The American Sokol is organizing an official tour in 2018 to attend the XVI All-Sokol Slet in Prague. The event is being organized by the Czech Sokol organization as part of the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the independent Czechoslovak State. In addition to Sokol participants from around the world, many domestic and foreign guests will attend. Membership in Sokol is not required to join American Sokol's trip.

Masaryk Memorial Updates



*Masaryk Birthday
Celebration and Wreath
Laying, March 7, 2017
(photo credit: Lillis Werder)*

The Tomáš G. Masaryk Memorial stands on Embassy Row in Washington. It honors an extraordinary man who set a high bar for democratically governing a new country of two distinct national groups – Czechs and Slovaks, which was created from the ashes of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Ever since creating the memorial in 2002, AFoCR has continued an essential role as its primary caretaker.

After finishing major repairs to the statue during 2016, AFoCR recently concluded new agreements through the National Park Service to provide regular site maintenance, including landscaping and periodic cleaning of the statue. AFoCR will also soon begin replacing trees, shrubs, and groundcover so that the site remains a haven of beauty in the city for the local community to enjoy.

AFoCR Director Michael Rokos recollects what his grandmother told him about meeting Masaryk during his visit to Baltimore in 1918: “He was a warm, approachable, man who connected with everyone he met.” AFoCR will continue to ensure that his legacy remains strong.

Czech Architecture Professors Visit U.S. Universities

AFoCR assisted in the planning and coordination of a 10-day U.S. visit in late April by two professors from the Department of Architecture, Faculty of Civil Engineering, of Prague’s Czech Technical University (“CTU”). The purpose of the visit by Professors Zuzana Pešková and Mikuláš Hulec, who heads the Department, was to discuss with U.S. architecture schools the prospect of arranging student exchange programs. American students would study at CTU for a semester or more and Czech students would do the same in the U.S.

CTU is one of the oldest and largest technical universities in Europe. The Department of Architecture offers bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate degrees in Architecture and Building Engineering. Most subjects are taught in English. Prague is a virtual museum of architecture, as treasures from the Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque eras remain intact because the city was not rebuilt during the 18th or 19th centuries and it was spared extensive destruction during World War II. The historic center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, as are 11 other structures and places in the Czech Republic.

Professor Hulec and his partner, Daniel Spička, were the architects for AFoCR’s project to rebuild the Woodrow Wilson Monument in Prague, completed in 2011. Previously, they had worked on a number of projects for the U.S. State Department, including the renovation of the façade of Prague’s Villa Petschek, the residence of the U.S. Ambassador.

Professors Pešková and Hulec visited Auburn University in Alabama, the University of Maryland, Howard University in Washington, and Philadelphia University. A highlight of their time in Alabama included a trip to the Rural Studio, an off-campus design-build program, where architecture students work hands-on on community-oriented projects. All the universities showed strong interest in pursuing the exchange program.

NCSML Features Dale Chihuly Art Collection



Over 70 art glass creations and drawings, with blazing color, coiled tendrils, overblown flora, and impish putti by Seattle-based glass artist Dale Chihuly are on display at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The exhibit, “Dale Chihuly: Venetians from the George R. Stroemple Collection” can be seen through October 1. After this exhibit the collection will be placed in permanent storage. The exhibit’s centerpiece is the masterwork 1,500-piece Laguna Murano Chandelier, which sprouts gold and bronze tendrils, seaweed, sea creatures, mermaids, and Poseidon himself.

Dale Chihuly is an American of Slovak ancestry. His grandfather, John, came from Slovakia in 1890 to work in the mines in Washington state. As a young artist, Dale was inspired by the art glass works of Stanislav Libenský and Jaroslava Brychtová and worked with them in Prague.

The George R. Stroemple Collection is internationally recognized as one of the most significant collections of artwork documenting the studio glass movement in the Pacific Northwest. It holds the largest number of Chihuly works in the world, except for Chihuly himself. Since 1990, when George Stroemple bought his first five Venetians - the flamboyant, highly ornate vessels covered in Technicolor flowers and vines that Chihuly started making in the early 1990s (featured in the NCSML exhibit), he has been on a Chihuly buying binge.

In a recent review of his work, *The Washington Post* described Chihuly, who is 75, as “the most famous glass artist of our time, and admirers see his work as inventive, colorfully dazzling, technically virtuosic and exuberant.”

For more information on the exhibit which closes on October 1, go to <http://www.ncsml.org/exhibits/page/2/>.



*Artist Dale Chihuly, 2014
(photo credit: Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images)*

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*Tomáš G. Masaryk
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*Candles Lit in Memory of
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